

137
AN INTERESTING
LETTER
TO THE
D U C H E S S
O F
DEVONSHIRE.

THIS IS SUCH A CREATURE,
WOULD SHE BEGIN A SECT, MIGHT QUENCH THE
ZEAL
OF ALL PROFESSORS ELSE, MAKE PROSELYTES
OF WHOM SHE BUT BID FOLLOW.

SHAKESPEARE.

L O N D O N :
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P R E F A C E.

IF it should be thought that the following Letter is too long, I can only observe, that the principal difficulty in writing it was, to confine the matter within its present limits.—If it should be objected, that the Historical Arguments are confined, and the deductions from them diffuse, I am sorry for it; because this was in some measure designed, and it would have spared me much trouble if I

P R E F A C E.

had encreased the former, and abridged the latter.—If it should be said to want form and regularity, I have to declare, that it is a work of the heart impressed with a favourite idea, and that, under such impressions, the thoughts flowed without restraint from my pen.—I did not propose to write a System; on the contrary, I prepared this Work for those whom System would have disgusted; nor could I be so inattentive to my own design, as to rob my thoughts of the little warmth they might possess, by a minute regard to precision and arrangement.

After

P R E F A C E.

After all,—it is but a Letter; and if I have not been guilty of any epistolary improprieties, I shall be fully satisfied.—The subject is very interesting to the Female Sex; and, without any diminution of the respect I bear to the great Lady to whom it is addressed, I present it as an offering of great good will to the attention of my Countrywomen.

AN INTERESTING
LETTER, &c.

M A D A M,

IT may be the business or the design of others to address Your Grace upon subjects, which, having a relation to the present moment, or to some transient fashion, are forgotten with the objects of them.—I shall pursue another course ; and, leaving the lash of satire, and the sneer of ridicule, to those who think them effectual, shall endeavour, if Truth

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has any influence over you, to call your attention to the most important interests of your nature.

This Book, Madam, if I execute my design, will be formed for every part of your life. I mean it not only to correct the errors of youth, but to confirm the good intention of riper years; and to ensure the only comforts of old age, if you should live to attain it. But in presenting it to the DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE, I would not be thought to confine its precepts or its information to her; they are formed for the whole Sex, Madam, as well as for you, though I address them to Your Grace, as an undoubted source of female example: and if they should
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aid in your breast the business of reflection, if they should open the door for Prudence and Discretion to enter into your heart, this little Volume will be productive of the most diffusive benefit. But even should you neglect, for I defy you to despise its precepts ; if you should, in your high-spirited moments, endeavour to ridicule, for you cannot falsify its informations ; I shall not be hopeless :---some minds, yet untainted, may, perhaps, find in its pages wherewith to fortify them against the prevailing contagion ; and parental affection may derive from thence new motives to vigilance and circumspection. Nay, if, neglected by the World, it should pass into the shades of Life, and make one in-

dividual honourable and happy, by directing her understanding to its best object, I may surely be contented. Indeed, if my views were not anxiously directed to the welfare and interest of others, the satisfaction which ever arises from honest endeavours to do good, would be a sufficient reward.

My design, in this Address, is to offer to Your Grace a few general observations upon the Influence of the Female Character in Society; wherein I shall endeavour briefly to trace its origin and progress, to what cause its present state is to be attributed, and how it ought to be exerted to promote the honour and happiness of Man and of themselves. This

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is a subject which must be interesting to every individual of the Female Sex. The Vain and the Fool will be curious to discover something that may feed their vanity, or amuse their folly ; as the Wise and Prudent, to improve their knowledge and direct their understanding : and with the utmost sincerity I wish, that the faint Picture of Female Virtue which will be pourtrayed by my Pen, may be far excelled by your original and genuine excellence.

It has been the common practice of those who have written in defence of Women, to be content with a long detail of persons of that Sex who were eminent for some Virtue, or skilled in some Science ; admired for their

fortitude, or amiable for their tenderness; and even the greater part of these examples have been taken from the Fables of Antiquity, the Stories of Romance, the Ages of Chivalry, or the Reign of Enthusiasm: and, after all, the number is so confined, that they may be considered as exceptions to any rule in their favour, as well as examples to support it.

I know not of any Author who appears to have entered impartially upon the subject. Some have hurried with the eagerness of Knight-Errantry to the praise of Women, while others, with a less glorious ardor, have laboured to depreciate them. A fair and unprejudiced History of
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the Female Character, derived from certain fixed principles founded in Truth and Experience, yet remains to be produced to the World. Indeed, where is the Man who is qualified to write, with due impartiality, on a subject of such an interesting nature? Youth cannot be trusted with a theme, where the vivid flame of Imagination would be supplied with such constant fuel; where Reason and Judgment would so often yield to delirium and rapture: nor can chilly and unfeeling Age be employed upon a subject which cannot be treated with justice, when the glow of imagination is passed away, and the softer sensibilities cease to be remembered. If we should apply to the intermediate period of Life, when

Passion is moderated but not extinct, when Judgment is strong without being morose, and Experience is arrived to strength and maturity, a difficulty still opposes which can hardly be surmounted; for where is the Man to be found who has lived in the World, that does not in a great degree, if not entirely, owe his comforts or his sorrows to the Female part of the Creation?—and strict partiality cannot be expected, where prejudice will inevitably arise from Gratitude or Resentment. The Man of learning and retirement, of deep study and philosophic enquiry, who can discriminate with certainty, and determine with judgment upon the various branches of scientific erudition, must here be indebted to the researches, and directed by the information

mation of others, and be liable to be misled by them. Besides, the Man of the closet will make, at best, but empty speculations upon Characters, which cannot be examined with effect but in the varying scenes of the World; and if we suppose him to leave his retirement, and to walk forth upon the Theatre of Public Life, to reflect and observe upon what he may see there,—his mind, accustomed to cool and regular investigation, would be unable to follow the quick and successive changes of Female fancy: he would be bewildered in the hurry of fashionable Life. And where would be the matter for wonder, if, amid the magic of Female Beauty, and the charms of Female Excellence, his Philosophy should

should be vanquished, and he should become their Adorer instead of their Judge?

There was a time of my life, when I myself had some thought of undertaking this delicate business; and had actually begun to prepare materials for an History of Woman, and a full Examination of the Character and Duties of the Female Sex: but being in the situation of those who owe the blessings of life to them, and bearing about me the continual and affecting sensibility of the obligation, I soon discovered that it was my lot to be their Panegyrist, and not their Historian.

That there is a difference of character in the Male and Female part of the
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the Creation, is universally acknowledged ; and some have thought proper to amuse their leisure in forming comparisons of their respective merits. This has proved at best but a question for the exercise of partial ingenuity, where the sophistry and art of the Writer have had but little intercourse with Truth in forming their decisions. When the characters of each are consummate, by a proper exercise of their respective duties, there is no superiority ;—their merits are equal ; and it is the due co-operation of them which forms the supreme happiness of life : in the scale of Beings they are the same.—The Mother, who with anxious tenderness nourishes the Infant with her milk, and watches over it with
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the never-failing eye of affection——
and the Father, whose active industry
is employed, with equal anxiety, for
his present and future provision—
look at them both,—and tell me
which is the superior ?

That the influence of Women in
Civil Society is very great, is an
opinion which I believe will be con-
firmed by an universal assent. It
appears to me to be no less evident,
that as Men have improved in know-
ledge and the arts of social life, this
influence has encreased. It may a-
muse Your Grace to be informed,
that in the early and barbarous Ages
of the World, hunting was the em-
ployment and profession of the Men.
To their skill, their courage, and their
industry

industry in the chase, they owed the food that nourished, and the raiment that covered them. The day was passed in labour, and the night in repose:—small was then the interval for Love, if passion unmingled with sentiment deserves the name. The savageness of their employment, and the fatigues attendant upon it, hardened their hearts against the soothing sentiments of tender nature. They were the Tyrants of the woods, and the Tyrants of their homes. The Beasts were their prey, and the Women were their slaves. The Forests of *Patagonia*, and many other parts of the uncultivated World, retain these vestiges of rude and primitive manners.

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To this, a milder state succeeded :
 —and when Men, tired of their
 bloody labours, had discovered the
 nature and value of gregarious Ani-
 mals, and had learned to form them
 into flocks and herds, then the
 Human Mind began to unfold the
 finer parts of its character. Amid the
 leisure of the pastoral employment,
 the Pastoral Reed first astonished the
 Plain ; and the Mind being now at
 rest from savage ideas, was open to
 the tender sentiments of affection,
 and taught that Reed to express
 them in the simple melody of Na-
 ture. A sense of Beauty and Female
 Excellence beamed upon the heart ;
 the sweet intercourse of soft and
 mutual Passion arose between the
 Sexes, and Love called forth and
 improved the faculties of the soul.

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This dawn of Science and of Virtue was the Golden Age, which charms so much in the fablings of Antiquity. This was that *Arcadia*, from whence Fancy has stolen her most interesting descriptions. This was the time when *Pan* and *Faunus*, and all the Sylvan Deities, are feigned by the Poets to have dwelt in the forests, and conversed with Men.— This was the infant state of Poetry and of Verse.

In the successive progress and improvements of Society, when it grew into fixed and regular establishments, in the distributive wisdom of Legislation Women were not forgotten; they were not without their privileges and their honours. Besides
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possessing the government of their families, they were sometimes admitted to preside at the Altars ; and, in times of war, their invocations and religious solemnities were considered as necessary to obtain the favour of Heaven, while their incitements confirmed the courage of Heroes, and their applauses heightened the glory of conquest. In the history of succeeding times it is no less evident, that the increase of Knowledge, the cultivation of Science, and the improvement of Arts, were favourable to Women, and combined to increase their influence ; which continued, with more or less variation, till that great and important Æra, when the revelation of a Divine Religion was administered to the World. Christianity,

anity, Madam, while it brought Life and Immortality to light, while it held forth its eternal rewards to the whole Human Race, is pregnant even with temporal privileges to your Sex, which, before its appearance, and in other religions, they never knew.

This is the distinguished period, when a certain, fixed, and authoritative equality seems to be established between the Sexes : This is the time when Women were first admitted, by the awful sanctions of Religion, to an equal share in the enjoyment of every temporal privilege, as well as the certain hopes of future happiness. From this source, Madam, flows all the consequence, freedom, and importance, which Your Grace

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in an eminent degree, and every Christian Woman in some degree, possesses at this day. Upon this ground I shall erect my standard of argument; and from hence will proceed every observation, censure, and admonition, which may compose the future part of this Letter. The subject is of a most interesting nature: higher abilities and abler pens than mine are requisite to do it justice; nevertheless I flatter myself, that Your Grace will not accuse me of vanity, if I add, that even in my feeble execution it will deserve, and I hope secure, your serious and favourable attention.

It may not, perhaps, be wholly improper to offer to Your Grace's
recol-

recollection, that the end of Christianity was to secure to Mankind the happiness of a Future World; and to enable them to co-operate in a design of such grace and importance, the Author of it communicated to them a Code of gracious and divine laws for their continual observance. I call them Gracious, Madam; for they not only mark the way to the happiness of Heaven, but are equally conducive to the most perfect happiness on Earth: and I call them Divine, because, among many other incontrovertible evidences, they are so wonderfully adapted to the nature of Man, to incite his good, and repress his evil dispositions, that he alone who created the one, could have formed the other. This system of

Religion, so new to the World, so excellent in its nature, and so wonderfully authenticated, would necessarily have some and no inconsiderable effect upon the Legislation of every Country where it was received ; and using human means to complete its designs, it could not have taken a more certain and general method of improving Society, than by admitting Women to their natural share in it.

The Christian Lawgiver, throughout the whole of his divine mission, neither in his precepts or his practice made any particular distinction between the Sexes. He came to save all the Human Race; it was not therefore to be supposed, that one part of
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it would be permitted to possess any real advantage over the other. Indeed, it seems to have been his design to restrain any false superiority, which the ignorance or the corruption of former times might have occasioned. He exalted Women to that equality with the other Sex, which the rights of Creation and the interests of Society evidently demand. It might be for this, among other gracious purposes, that he so frequently made them the particular objects of his respect and favour. The first full declaration of his divine character and mission was made to a Woman at the Well of SAMARIA. The only tears he was ever seen to shed, were drawn a-down his sacred cheeks by the sorrows of the Sisters of La-

zarus. He received the ministry of Women with regard ; and at a time when he was deserted by all men, when even his Disciples had fled away, and the confident *Peter* dared not to acknowledge him ; when the Powers of Darkness triumphed ; the only person who was inspired by Heaven at that period with courage to assert his innocence was a Woman, the Wife of *Pilate*. When the doleful tragedy was past, and the great event to which it led was also completed, he first made known his Resurrection to Women, and appointed them his Ambassadors to the afflicted and doubting Disciples, to give them courage, and confirm their faith.

I do not mean to inform Your Grace of these, with many other similar

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lar events recorded in the New Testament, with which, from your excellent education, you must be so well acquainted ; but rather to collect them together in a point of view so favourable to your Sex, and wherein, perhaps, they may never have been the objects of your consideration. But these marks of attention, and tokens of respect, which Women received from the Son of God, were only the fore-runners of those privileges which the establishment of his Religion would secure to them. To discover what these advantages are, it may be thought necessary to enter minutely into the present state of Women, in those parts of the world where the Christian Religion is not predominant, as

well as their character, situation, and influence, before its appearance on the earth, in order to form a just comparison with their present condition in the Christian world. But without conducting Your Grace through such a long and tedious track of history, I hope to impress the certainty of these benefits with equal force upon your conviction.

The laws of every Christian Country attend with a regard to the sanctity and privileges of Marriage, not to be found in the histories of ancient times, nor in any existing people or nation where the Gospel Revelation is unknown or not believed;—and Marriage, sanctified by Religion, and guarded by laws, as it is
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throughout the Christian World, may be said to be the strong-hold of Female Power. Polygamy, or the having a plurality of wives, is forbid by the Evangelical Laws:—Concubinage is among the crimes which they threaten with the anger of Heaven; and the practice of purchasing the Daughter of her Father, which rendered a Wife little better than a slave, with many other customs of too gross a nature to bear a repetition, has yielded to the just and equal spirit of the Gospel. The duties of the matrimonial state are particularly pointed out and enforced by the sacred Writers of the New Testament; and the Legislators of Christian Countries, conforming to the genius of the Gospel, have
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given their aid in supporting the sacred character of the Marriage-Contract, and in punishing the violations of it.

To be the more fully convinced how important these truths are to your Sex, I would recommend Your Grace to reflect for a moment on the wretched and degrading state of Women in those countries where the standard of Mahomet was unfurled, and the Religion of that Impostor prevails. There you will see them raised but a small degree above the class of domestic animals, denied almost the use of their reason in this world, and without hopes of any future existence.

Look,

Look, for a moment, into the Seraglios of the East, the dwellings of imprisoned Beauty, and behold their wretched inhabitants subject to the will of a capricious Tyrant, knowing no happiness but in being the carnal and temporary objects of a brutal passion; and even this uncertain pre-eminence embittered by Jealousy and by Fear;—excluded from all society but that of Rivals whom they hate, and in the vigilant custody of Beings whom they detest; who, deprived of comfort themselves, make out a wretched satisfaction in realizing the jealousies of their imperious masters, and revenging upon these unfortunate Women the cruelty by which they themselves are separated, as it were, from the Human Race.—To
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these unhappy Fair-ones, the *Balm of Gilead* is not fragrant, and the *Rose of Sharon* blooms in vain !

It is unnecessary to multiply examples, or I might beg your further attention to the manners of numberless other Pagan Countries and Savage Nations, as they are made known to us in the writings of Voyagers whose credibility has not yet been doubted, where the Female Sex are often represented in a state far more humiliating and disgraceful to rational beings, than that which I have described.

The Plurality of Wives, even in the Jewish Government, rendered the Female Character very inferior and
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subordinate. The Husband could not make an equal division of his affections among a number of Women; so that they must be altogether subject to a reigning Favourite, a situation replete with misery and disappointment, or enjoy an alternate and temporary exaltation, embittered by its uncertainty. The Husband, therefore, to govern his family, must have recourse to the absolute power of a Lord and Master. Under these circumstances, Marriage would be deprived of all those sweets and comforts which spring from equality, friendship, and social intercourse; while it must be the continual source of rivalry, divisions, and domestic disturbance. The Children of one Woman found a cruel step-mother in
every

every other Wife of the Father: each son, or filial band, espoused the interest of their particular mother, and considered the rest as aliens or enemies. We may find sad examples of domestic feuds, arising from this source, even in the Royal Family of *David*. The facility of divorce also among the *Hebrews*, as well as many other Nations, by weakening the chain of Matrimony, still encreased the inferiority of the fairer Sex.

From what has been observed, Your Grace will permit me to form the following natural conclusion:— That the right which a Woman now has to the entire affections of her Husband; that his bestowing them on another is an offence against the
Laws

Laws of Heaven ; that she has a protection from the Laws of Man against his injustice ; that she is no longer liable to be purchased of her Father for money ; that she has an equal claim to the obedience of her children ; that the disunion of the marriage-contract is a matter of disgrace and difficulty * ; that she
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* The frequency of divorce in these times may be supposed, by some, to militate against this assertion ; but when it is considered that the decision of the Spiritual Court, in the business of divorce, must be confirmed by the express and successive consent of the Three Branches of the Legislature, who cannot be supposed to grant it but after repeated examinations, and the fullest conviction, this objection must sink into nothing. Besides, if I have not been misinformed, the application for a divorce has, in more than one instance, been not only unsuccessful, but treated with a just indignation by Parliament, when it appeared that the Parties had been guilty of purposed infidelities

is capable of possessing property, and can claim the right of inheritance *; that she possesses a political existence, and is admitted, in the utmost extent, to the character of a rational Being; that for these, and every other privilege a Woman now possesses, and an emancipation from the

infidelities in order to effect it. As to the disgrace attendant upon a divorce, though it may not be so marked, or so general as it ought to be in a Christian Country, it must, nevertheless, be followed with painful mortifications to any woman who has been guilty of the crime, without the most glaring and public proofs of which a final disjunction of the marriage-union cannot be obtained.

* The *Salique* Law, which prevails in some Countries to the exclusion of Females from succeeding to the Crown, was not founded in any supposed inability in the Sex to undertake the charge of imperial government, but to prevent the power of the Throne from being controuled by foreign influence, with which it might be endangered, if a Queen should marry a stranger to procure heirs to it.

slavery

slavery, prostitution, and other degrading circumstances to which she has been heretofore subject,—she stands indebted to the CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

I trust, Madam, that it would be needless to point out to Your Grace, the necessity of a grateful return for all these advantages. I doubt not but you feel the warmest emotions of gratitude; nor need I, surely, urge you to promote a Religion, to which your sex owes so much, by a sincere and continued example of obedience to its precepts; and to use your immediate influence on such of the other sex, over whom you may be supposed consistently to exert it, to confirm them in, or recal them to the be-

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lief of its sacred character, and the practice of its duties.

The female Influence which, in these days, is so much encreased, and is exerted under such high authority, seems, when rightly employed, to be essential to the happiness and honour of Society ; and the particular energy which has been given to it by the Christian Religion, implies, that its chief object should be to promote the Christian doctrines. In its full extent and right application, it is evidently of celestial origin, and, therefore, must be intended for the benefit of Mankind.

To be employed as the immediate and principal instrument of Heaven
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in answering so great a design, as the extending a Religion inspired by itself, is an office of the highest exaltation. To use, therefore, this legitimate and approved influence to any other purpose but the good of those over whom it is exerted, must be a crime of the highest nature;—it is no less than to convert the means of Heaven's mercy into engines of destruction;—it is disturbing, in some sort, the system of Infinite Wisdom. Besides, as in the various duties required by this Religion, temporal happiness is annexed to eternal rewards, every vocation of life must be fulfilled with greater propriety and honour by a man of Christian piety, than by those whose only security to the State, and

to their neighbour, is some base principle of self-interest, or the apprehension of legal punishment. So that if a Woman would wish to ascertain any solid happiness in the marriage-state; if she is anxious to secure to herself the unalienable affections of her husband, the willing duty of her children, the sincere regard of her friends, the honest veneration of her dependants and inferiors, and the respect even of the vicious and abandoned, she should be a Christian; and exert her influence to give the same honourable character to her husband, her children, her friends, and her dependants. This would not only be the source of unspeakable domestic felicity, but of public honour. The State wherein she
lives,

lives, if they should be called to its service, will be indebted to her influence ;—for who are so likely to serve it with effect as those men who act from principles produced or confirmed by the Christian Religion ;—men who will not be led away by any temptation ; whom bribes cannot purchase, and whom nothing can awe but the fear of doing wrong ? If the inferior, but not less useful offices of life should be their lot, Society will be equally indebted to her for honest and industrious members.

It may, perhaps, be observed, that women, from their education and tender frame, are not qualified to interfere in many of the concerns of

men. This may, strictly speaking, be the case : and yet there does not appear to be any situation in which a man can be placed, wherein the influence of female virtue and affection may not reach him, and do him good.—Did the Wives and Mothers of ancient *Sparta* put on the casque and unsheath the sword when its Heroes prepared for battle?—No : they neglected not their domestic cares ; they remained to ply the wool and the distaff ; nevertheless, they did not fail to exhort their husbands and their children to defy danger, bloodshed, and death, in defence of their Country. Nor were these exhortations vain ; they ennobled the principles of Honour, and elevated the love of Glory.

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To exercise a right and a virtuous influence over those who are the objects of her regard and affection, it is by no means necessary that a woman should step forth from that temperate but tender dignity which improved Society has annexed to her character. To encourage a sense of a superintending Providence, and the favour of Heaven; the honour, the wisdom, and the pleasure of Justice; to forgive deviations from what is right with kindness; to promote every rational pleasure; to console in affliction, and to share disappointment; these are the means which the Christian Woman will employ to extend her power. If misfortune should threaten; if prosperity should totter, and a fond but irresolute

husband should listen to the temptation of preserving himself, and what is most dear to him, from adversity with the loss of his honour; then will the Christian Wife step forth, encourage his drooping spirits; assure him that she is ready to attend with love, affection and contentment, to any lot of life; that the splendors he leaves behind are but dust in the balance, compared with his virtue; that his virtue alone will ennoble any condition, and gild the blackest cavern of Adversity. She will hold forth, for his imitation, the animating picture of those men, of whom the World was not worthy; who, amid pains and tortures, forsook not their integrity. She will urge him to sacrifice every thing on earth

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to the smiles of his conscience, and the approbation of Heaven. Such incitements would not only be sufficient to confirm a wavering virtue ; they would almost awaken Insensibility itself to the desire of Martyrdom.

It is no uncommon thing, in these times, to see an amiable Character deluded to his ruin by the arts of designing Women. How many examples might be produced of the fatal power of Female blandishments ;—and how many instances are there of men, who have been reduced by them from every thing that is great and noble ? Nay, what numbers are there, who, at the same unpropitious altar, are daily sacrificing

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Fortune, Fame, Family, Friends, and every thing that gives value to life, or honour to Human Nature!

The same power, when aided by Virtue and Religion, might, surely, with equal success and certainty restrain the Passions of impetuous Youth, secure their honour, and lead them to happiness: nor are these degenerate days without examples of Men preserved from ruin, disgrace, and misery, by the wise and vigilant conduct of their Wives, their Mothers, and other female relations. These examples, perhaps, are not so many as an humane person might wish; yet they are sufficient to prove the certain consequence, if Beauty, and the winning

ning graces of the female mind were firmly enlisted on the side of Religion. One amiable woman, says a distinguished French writer, makes more proselytes to Philosophy and Letters, when she loves them with discernment, than all the Professors in the world; and Religion, without any disparagement to the zeal and ability of its teachers, would experience a very distinguished advancement, when supported by Female influence and example.

The Preacher, confined to stated seasons and a certain mode of instruction, however gifted he may be with Knowledge and Eloquence, the power of reasoning and the art of persuading, will oftentimes exert his talents

talents in vain : But when the zeal of Piety is added to the charms of Beauty, the softness of Female Manners, and the tenderness of Female Affection, the rigours and austerities of Religion will appear as pleasing duties ; and he must be depraved and dull as the deaf Adder of the Psalmist, who can refuse to listen to the voice of the Charmer who charms so wisely *.

But, alas ! and the reflection grieves me as I write, there are Wo-

* Christianity ranks Women among its first professors, in this and other European Countries ;—and in the narratives of the laborious propagators of the Gospel under the Romish Church, very honourable mention is made of the zeal and influence of their Female Converts, and the certain success which attended it, even in those savage nations where to be a woman was to be a slave.

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men who are so insensible to the good they have received from the promulgation of Christianity, that they not only neglect, but openly deride its duties: while others, who affect thought and reflection upon the matter, vainly think to secure to themselves the reputation of science and ability, in adopting and endeavouring to support the arguments of unbelievers against it: thus abusing the very freedom and improvements they owe to the Christian Religion, in exposing its precepts and doubting its authority. There are, I fear, such monsters in the world; excuse, Madam, the harshness of the name,—*but a Female Deist is a Monster of Ingratitude.*

A Woman without religion, is an object of disgust and contempt even to those of the other Sex who the most affect to despise it; and tho' there are Villains who, in order to betray Female Innocence, will endeavour to rob it of those sentiments and principles which are its best defence, yet they would tremble at the idea of educating their Daughters without that Religion and sense of Virtue, which they have often found to be the only insurmountable difficulty to the accomplishment of their own lustful desires. The Woman who should professedly educate her Daughters without Religion, would be an object of general detestation; and the young persons of the same sex, who should avow their infidelity,

fidelity, would seldom be solicited to the honour of Marriage, but be considered as an easy prey to illegitimate passion.

The fear of public censure, the regard of friends, the value of reputation will, without doubt, maintain a considerable influence over Female Virtue ; but if they are not supported by principles of Religion, and that rooted sense of right and wrong which accompanies it, they will not, oftentimes, be able to withstand the arts and enticements of the betrayer. Religion is the only effectual preservative of youth, beauty and innocence, from the disastrous fate of yielding to the seductions of men.——I call it Disastrous ;——for
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when a Woman is known to have lost her chastity, there seems to be no human resource.

In vain, with tears, her loss she may deplore,
In vain look back to what she was before ;
She sets like stars that fall to rise no more.

From the harsh and uncharitable opinion of the World, there is no appeal but to Heaven ; and, amid dejection and remorse, the ruined Fair-one scarce dares to lift her eyes to the Being she has offended. Or, should she be, in some degree, awakened to her wretched situation, some flattering phantom of pleasure, some fallacious hope may, by its gaudy delusions, too easily tempt her aside from the thorny paths of contrition

trition and penitence; and where these are left behind, despair frequently succeeds, or that abandoned state of prostitution which is too shocking even for reflection.

I have dwelt the longer upon this sad picture of female misery, to impress with more power the necessity of a religious conduct in persons of high station, whose example would be so propitious to virtue and good manners: and surely, if there is a state of exaltation in this World superior to every other, it is where eminent station is graced with eminent virtue. Such a character, Madam, may be yours!—Haste then to attain it, and shine forth in all the radiance of Christian Virtue!—The

E Meteors

Meteors of Fashion give but a delusive ray; they originate in vanity, glitter but for a moment, and are seen no more.

It may, indeed, be observed, that, while I lament the want of virtuous examples among the Great, I pass by the very exalted station where it may be found; and that I have forgot, in the language of a learned and venerable Prelate, that in this Kingdom *the best example is in the first place* *. I most sincerely agree with the assertion of the Right Reverend Divine, and rejoice in it:—But Majesty is, perhaps, at too great

* The Bishop of Litchfield and Coventry, in his excellent Sermon before the House of Lords, on the General Fast in 1777.

a distance to communicate its influence to the private concerns and moral conduct of ordinary life; or the mists which surround it may obstruct its beams.—The vices of Courtiers will obscure the virtues of the Monarch; while state-necessity, that foe to Royal goodness, may prevent a good and Christian King from cleansing his palace of the vermin which infest it. He may be a bright example of conjugal fidelity, while the Man in whose wisdom he confides, and on whom he bestows his honours, may be notorious for the violation of it. Besides, a Court which affects sameness rather than variety of appearance, will check rather than encourage within its own limits the excess of Fashion; and So-

vereigns who hurry, as it were, from
 the pomp of Royalty to the tran-
 quil pleasures of Domestic Life, are
 seldom considered as objects for imi-
 tation, how well soever they may de-
 serve it. They are not often seen,
 but when surrounded with the pomp
 of Majesty. The external splendor
 attracts all attention from the Cha-
 racter of the Individual; so that the
 exertions of Private Virtue, and the
 constant attentions to the duties of
 Domestic Life—the Father, the
 Husband, and the Master; the Mo-
 ther, the Wife, and the Mistress, are
 lost in the retirement of the Palace.—
 The state of the Sovereign is seen
 by all, but the virtue of the Indivi-
 dual is known only by report. I
 wish, with the utmost sincerity, that
 the

the private life of our Sovereign and his Royal Consort was imitated by all their subjects.—There would not then be a Faithless Husband, an Undutiful Wife, or a Careless Parent, in the whole British Dominions.

It does not appear, that rank and eminence of station alone, are sufficient to introduce any particular mode of appearance or conduct. Perhaps, there must be something of singularity in the fashion, or a certain kind of animated folly in the person who adopts it, in order to give it a popular acceptance. Our most gracious and amiable Queen, both by her own example, and, as I have been informed, by her frequent declarations, endeavoured to banish

the use of Powder from among the young persons who attended the Court, and could hardly be gratified in the appearance of her own Maids of Honour:—while Your Grace, by the singular manner in which you adorned your person, not only placed an exorbitant plume upon the heads of all who frequent the polite places of public resort, but gave the same decoration to every unhappy Female who patrols the purlieus of Prostitution. If the influence of Your Grace's virtues and future prudence should be as extensive as your late display of fashionable levities, the formation of a *Coterie* would be an Herculean labour,—and the *Magdalen* will become an useless establishment.

This

This deviation from my particular subject demands Your Grace's excuse; but as I am not writing a precise and regular treatise, and only offering some general ideas to your consideration, I thought it would be better to answer any probable objection at the very place, where it was most natural to suppose it would be made. I must now, therefore, intreat the favour of you to continue your attention to what I shall urge upon the due exertion of that Female Influence, which, I doubt not, has been fully proved to the satisfaction of Your Grace and every other Woman who may peruse these pages.

There is no sentiment to which an amiable mind is so easily awaken-

ed, as that of Gratitude ; nor any duties more satisfactory to fulfil, than those which spring from it. To return kindness to those from whom we have received favour, is the natural wish of all who deserve the latter. How much every Woman, in a Christian Country, is indebted to the Christian Religion, I have already examined ; and how much, in a particular manner, Your Grace is bound to be grateful to it, who, from your exalted station, and the country wherein you live, must be truly sensible of the benefits it has communicated to your Sex, I leave to your understanding, Madam, to determine : and if you consult it for a moment, I am sure it will tell you that, in becoming a Christian

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tian in deed as well as name, and exerting your influence to promote a Christian spirit and conduct in others, you will do no more than what Gratitude demands.—In the common offices of life, in the communications of ordinary friendships, I doubt not but you make due returns to any kindness bestowed upon you; and that offers of common service are not unnoticed or forgotten by you. If, therefore, in matters which, perhaps, may only relate to the enjoyment or vanity of the present hour, you have been accustomed to feel a passing kind of obligation;---I trust, Madam, such invaluable privileges and blessings as I have pointed out to you, will call forth a lively, active, and continued

tinued sense of Gratitude to the source of it.

Your real honour and happiness is deeply concerned in your being a Christian. Riches, Rank, and Beauty, however great or acknowledged they may be, will not protect you by their power from dishonour and wretchedness; nay, they are often traitors to those who possess them, and become the principal abettors of their misery and disgrace. You, Madam, are but young!—You have taken, as it were, but a few steps in the career of Life; nevertheless, tho' Fortune has been lavish in her bounties to you, and Pleasure strewed her roses wherever you tread, you have known your distress;—

Sor-

Sorrow has perched upon your Toilette ;—that Altar of Vanity has received the tribute of your tears. Happiness is of a solid nature ; the pleasures and vanities of the World will not support it : it is of celestial origin, and is discovered to the Inhabitants of this World, to make them eager to pursue their way to a better, where it may be possessed in fullness, and for ever. The perfection of happiness belongs not to this transitory state. Mortals are capable of conceiving its existence, and of enjoying those rays of real pleasure with which the Mercy of Heaven illuminates the dark scene of Life ; but without Religion these cannot be but faintly known ; and with Religion they afford, amid the sorrows

sorrows and pains of a mortal existence, a kind of insight into immortal glory. In sickness, in sorrow, or in death, will Rank or Riches support you? When Disease is preying upon your frame, will the consciousness that you are a Dutchess relieve your pain;—or will the medicine be less bitter because it is presented to you in a cup of gold? No, Madam, these will avail you not; but Religion would afford you patience, and make you resigned; while the consciousness of being a Christian would give you that fortitude which a reflection on Honours and Titles serves but to diminish. If friends should prove false, if the ingratitude of those whom you have fostered should turn
 upon

upon you, if malice should insult your happiness, where will be the shield to protect you against them? Your exalted station will not secure you; nay, it is that, perhaps, which exposes you the more to their assaults.—Riches will not afford relief;—they have already purchased you false friends and base ingratitude; but Religion, which produces a rectitude of thought and action, will support the consciousness of it against all human power, and bear its votaries safe through the stormy wind and tempest which assails the Palace as well as the Cottage. From Death, the common lot of all, nothing can preserve you; but Religion can lessen the terrors of its approach,

and

and banish the fears of an Hereafter,
by assuring to you the rewards of it.

But you live not for yourselves ;
there is another Sex to whom these
important truths may be equally
applied, and over whom you have a
very powerful and acknowledged
influence. To exert it, therefore,
in conveying the happy convictions
of your breasts to theirs, in making
them sensible of the benefits, the ho-
nours, the happiness of Religion, and
in discovering to them, that, among
its other inestimable advantages,
they owe your tenderness, affection,
constancy, and virtue to that source
of good, will be fulfilling the ends
of Providence in giving you that
influence over them.

Instead

Instead of unfolding your charms
to catch the gaze of a curious multi-
tude, or as traps for the flattery and
admiration of the idle and dissipated
Men of Fashion which surround you;
instead of resting your consequence
on that Beauty whose duration will
be so short, use the winning graces
which are yours, to give Virtue its
most lovely appearance; employ
your attractive powers to make Re-
ligion charm the eyes of all who
know you; and by such exertions,
secure that admiration which will
last through life, make you beloved
when Beauty can charm no more,
and extend your example to the
applause and imitation of distant
Times, when your fine form shall
be mouldered into dust.

Women

Women who act in conformity to this rule of conduct, will fulfil in a pre-eminent degree the designs of their Creation. They will secure Happiness and Honour to themselves; and, while they offer a general good example to the World, will be the means of making those men happy and honourable to whom they may be related by the ties of kindred, birth, the union of marriage, or the more distant connections of Civil Life; confirming their good principles and resolutions, swaying their doubtful opinions to what is right, or recalling them from the error of their way by such attentions, kindness and argument, as Vice itself cannot resist. The State wherein they live will be grateful to such

Women

Women, who thus promote a better security for Virtue among its Citizens, than all the commands of law, or terrors of punishment. Thus, Madam, your Sex, without entering into the laborious task of Society and Government, which are better adapted to the frame and character of Men, may, however, be extensively useful in every department of it. They may enforce the industry of the Labourer, quicken the genius of the Artist, and dispose the Trader to honest dealing; while, in the higher sphere of influence, they may aid the integrity of the Ministry, direct the zeal of the Patriot, and, while they enliven the eloquence of the Preacher, be the examples of his precepts.

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This elevation so far exceeds, both in real consequence and happiness, what the most lavish bounty of Monarchs can bestow, that it has been a matter of frequent astonishment to me, that vanity and the love of superiority, which take so many unavailing means to procure their ends, have not sometimes ventured upon this, where they would most effectually obtain them.

It is not uncommon for young and thoughtless persons, who are eager after pleasure, and listen alone to the suggestion of their passions in the pursuit of it, to consider Religion as an enemy to delight and satisfaction, because it is disposed to check their intemperance, and restrain
their

their excesses. Your Grace may, perhaps, in the hurry of fashionable Life, have already forgotten the rudiments of your Nursery and the instructions of your Mother, and consider religious counsels as impertinent and useless. I will endeavour to recall them to your remembrance.

Permit me then to inform you, Madam, that Religion is a lively, chearful, active principle, the foe of gloom and discontent; the source of every pleasing, amiable, and tender sentiment; the spring of every virtue; that thinks of nothing less than to forbid pleasure; on the contrary, it commands the pursuit of it, and only opposes that excess and immoderate attachment to it, which

ends in certain disappointment and bitter repentance. Religion does not forbid the use, but the abuse of what this World affords. As it relates to the form and construction of Human Society, it is entirely free from that levelling principle which sets itself against, and would wish to destroy the different ranks and stations of life; tho' it forbids pride in the great, and envy in the little. Neither does it deny a becoming attention to external appearance: It would not snatch the Sceptre from the King, the Lawn from the Prelate, or the Ermine from the Judge:---- It would not take the Coronet from your Coach, or the Diamond from your Neck—where Virtue is, these are most virtuous—but it commands
you

you to consider them according to their real value, merely as the external trappings of rank and station, and connected with those forms of life which are necessary to the good order of well-regulated Society. Nor is Religion an enemy to amusement or recreation; nay, she encourages a disposition to pursue, and a relish to enjoy them; but they must be such as give chearfulness to Virtue, enliven Wisdom, and fortify the mind against any temptation from the guilty joys of Intemperance.— Believe me, Madam, Piety and Pleasure are so far from being enemies to each other, that, on the contrary, they are the firmest friends, and possess inseparable interests. Religion does not enjoin her votaries

to hide themselves in the secret recesses of retirement: It is for her interest that they should be seen; her advancement owes its increase to that public display of Christian virtues, which covers Vice with shame, and drives the monster to its hiding-place.

The *Cardinal Bentivoglio*, speaking of the Princess *Clara-Eugenia-Isabella* of *Spain*, makes the following observation:—To look upon the piety of her Court, her Palace might be taken for a Monastery; on the other hand, to consider its pomp and magnificence, it must be universally acknowledged to be the most agreeable and splendid Court in the World. And tho' she gave a due share
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of her time to the practice of religious duties and the exercise of Christian virtue, she did not refrain from her recreations, among which, that of the chace was frequently enjoyed. She did not think them inconsistent with her character as a Woman or a Christian, if she did not disparage them with folly or extravagances.

True Devotion, Madam, is the friend [of Chearfulness. Innocence never loses sight of pleasure ; and to obtain the favour of God, is not to abandon, but to secure the favour of Men.—To be no one's enemy ; to be every one's friend ; to be the affectionate Wife, the tender Mother, the kind Neighbour, the good Mistress ; to commit no injuries her-

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self,

self, and to forgive them when committed by others; to relieve those who are in want; to seek out modest Merit and reward it; to encourage Industry and Virtue in her dependants, by disposing of her bounties according to the merit of those who may be the object of them; to mingle with the World, but not with the follies of it; to bear with her into the croud, where her rank and connections will sometimes compel her to go, a simplicity of character which charms those who affect to despise it, while it silences the tongue of Flattery, and damps the purpose of corruption;—to observe that external appearance belonging to station, which the established customs of the times demand, and to which some

attention,

attention may be due; but to prefer the enjoyment of Nature and of Virtue, in the tender society of her Family and Friends, to all the splendor and gaiety of the World:—This is a just picture of that conduct which distinguishes a religious person of rank and fortune: And may the time be near at hand, when I should not be thought a flatterer in applying it to you !

Your Grace will be pleased to observe, that this is not a melancholy representation of human duty; I could contrast it with a description of what is called human pleasure, which you would, I believe, acknowledge to be a far more solemn subject of consideration. I could compare the
 Envy,

Envy, Jealousy, Extravagance, Dissipation, Loss of Health, &c. to say no worse, which so frequently attend the latter,---with the Serenity, Contentment, heartfelt Satisfaction, lasting Pleasure, and, I will add, the tender, virtuous Sorrows of the former.-- Besides, Madam, the practice of it will not require the attention, trouble, or pain, which that Woman must exercise and undergo, who looks to the pleasures of the World for happiness, and rests her importance upon the admiration of the Crowd.

If the spirit of Christianity was to possess an universal influence among Women, there would be no interested marriages ; the education of the
fairer

fairer Sex would take a new turn; and the instilling right and lasting principles of Religion into their tender minds, would be preferred to the acquisition of a foreign Tongue, or the fashionable communications of a foreign Governess. Families would not then be ruined by extravagance; and the portions of children would not be seized to pay the gaming-debts of their parents. In short, all the petty competitions, the violence of scandal, and the spirit of Coquetry, which mark these times in such conspicuous colours, would no longer disgrace them.—Indeed it may be urged, and with too great reason, that such a reformation as I have just described can be alone produced by a Messenger from Heaven.—This,

Madam,

Madam, I acknowledge ;—for Religion alone can effect it, and She comes from thence: She is the offspring and the embassador of the Sky, who pleads the cause of Heaven against the World, and would lead her votaries from transitory and uncertain pleasures to a celestial inheritance.

We certainly live in times of universal depravity ; nevertheless, I cannot be persuaded, but the good example of persons in the superior stations would check the evil ; and though they might not be able at once to stop the current of folly, they would lessen its force and repel its inundations :—They would, in proportion to their number and influence,

fluence, approach to that picture of happy society which I have just described *.

I may

* Few people are qualified to make a just comparison between the times wherein they live, and those which preceded them ;—I am not one of the number ; nevertheless, I shall indulge myself in offering a few observations upon the subject.—Former times were not without their wickedness ; the human passions have ever been intemperate, and Vice, in a greater or less degree, has never ceased to take a great share in the conduct of Mankind : but, from what I have heard and read, our forefathers seem at least to have been sensible of shame. In their days, the deed of darkness was done in darkness, and, in the language of Scripture, Men shunned the light when their deeds were evil ; and whatever might be committed in secret, the general conduct of Mankind was graced with a propriety and decorum, which proves that a sense of what is right was not then forgotten.—A shameless, daring effrontery, a carelessness of reputation, an inattention to the good opinion of the World, with an open and avowed prostitution of real honour, are the notorious and
very

I may venture, I believe, to assert,
without being guilty of any misre-
presen-

very reproachful characteristicks of the present age.—And as a great addition to the calamity, the Female part of Society is greatly involved in this description : Nay, as I write, the names of many Women in high rank intrude upon my recollection, who would, I fear, be glaring and acknowledged proofs of the foregoing assertions.—That Women have been always chaste and always faithful, I do not declare ; but that they should consider a breach of chastity as a weakness rather than a crime ; or that, instead of throwing a veil over a false step, they should rather wish to expose it as a matter of pride, and a proof of their charms, is a refinement peculiar, at least in this nation, to this period.

From the knowledge I have of the World, I should not, perhaps, be greatly astonished, in an age of so much luxury and seduction as the present, if the carelessness, indifference, and depravity of an Husband should occasion the infidelity of a Wife ;—but when I see her avail herself of his vices and dispositions to violate the most sacred ties of social life in the face of the World, and derive a vanity from such a conduct ;—in spite of daily experience,
I feel

presentation, that Your Grace took a pride in creating and sanctifying ridiculous fashions. May I ask, Ma-

I feel astonishment, and my pity for human weakness is changed into horror at human depravity.

The frequent divorces which have happened, even in my remembrance, give a strong confirmation of what I have already suggested.—The legal disunion of marriage was an event of which a long course of years furnished but few Examples, till the divorce and subsequent marriage of a Lady in one of the highest ranks of life.—Since that time, these proceedings have multiplied in such a manner as can only be accounted for by that bold defiance of public opinion, and disregard of character, which I have already mentioned.

However, the Noble Lady to whom this little volume is addressed, is as yet at a great distance from any part of the above description.—May she never approach it!—Tho' truth obliges me to observe, that among those whom she honours with her acquaintance and familiarity, there are some, I fear, whose characters continually occurred to me as I was writing the foregoing observations;—and who cannot, therefore, be fit companions for any Woman who fears the loss of reputation, and retains the love of virtue.

dam,

dam, concerning the reality of those pleasures which it produced ;---and may I continue the question concerning the mortification which accompanied it ?---The eager curiosity of a gaping crowd does not so often denote applause as disapprobation. Where the object possesses worth and dignity, the desire of seeing or contemplating it, possesses all the sobriety of respect, and is not marked with hurry and tumult.

You have hitherto been approached either as a Duchess, a Beauty, or a young person of rank and levity, who thought she had a right to exhibit herself in any manner she might think proper, and to promote any fashionable amusements that might suit her fancy.

In

In the latter capacity, you certainly possess an allowed supremacy:--however, it is but a sorry pre-eminence; for little is gained by it, but being the adopted parent of every absurdity which Fashion, fertile in absurdities, administers to your Sex.

The dignity of some Women, says an eminent Writer, is all artificial. It consists in the motions of their eyes, the toss of their heads, a stately mien, and a superficial wit, which is admired, only because it is not examined. There is in others an easy, natural greatness, nothing beholden to motions, looks or gesture, but springs from the heart, and is the offspring of their noble nature: a merit neither noisy nor ostentatious,

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but

but real and solid, which is accompanied with a thousand virtues, whose radiance all their modesty cannot conceal from those who possess the least discernment.

The respect, such as it is, Madam, which is paid to your title, has nothing to do with you ; and as for the flatteries which are poured forth, and the incense which is offered up to your personal charms, you will soon discover how long they will last. Believe me, if you would but possess yourself of that dignity which proceeds from a wise, upright, regulated Christian conduct,---you would look back from this real elevation upon the most delightful moments, and the most important engagements

ments of your past life, as the fretful
amusements of your childish days.

Gold is not the best wealth; there is
a wisdom which is more valuable than
the purest ore. Titles are not the only,
nor the true distinctions of honour :
Virtue alone confers real dignity; she
ennobles the mind, and, without her,
the sounding names of the Great serve
but to make vice and villainy more
notorious. Permit me to add, Madam,
that this is not the only state wherein
you are to exist;---there is another
World, to which you will be called,
the happiness and honours whereof
will not depend on your worldly titles,
your mortal charms, or your present
flatterers,--but on your Religious con-
duct. This, as a Christian Woman,

you must know and believe ;—and that when you shall be examined as to your qualifications for future glory, no other consideration will be paid to the high station you hold in the World, but that which will enhance the difficulties of this day of trial. You will be made to answer for the effects of your example, the use of your wealth, and the uncommon means of doing good which were allotted you ;—while the laborious Peasant, who, by his honest and toilsome Industry, paid his annual tribute to that treasury which supported your splendor, and who brought up his family in the fear of God, may find less to obstruct his passage to eternal happiness than Your Grace.

In

In this address, I have supposed you, Madam, to retain some of those excellent principles which were considered as matters of the utmost importance in your education.—I have done you the honour to conclude, that however the levity of Youth and the delusions of the World have led you astray, you would shudder at the idea of shewing an open contempt of your faith.—Whatever disregard you may have sometimes discovered, in the course of your high spirits, to the strict rules of prudence, I never heard that you had, in the careless flights of wit and raillery, made a jest of Religion.—Vanity, mistaken Vanity, has, I fear, misled you.—The desire of pleasing is natural to all good minds ; but to

preserve it from error, requires a continual and sober regulation.— Beauty deceives the person who possesses it more than those who are most dazzled by its charms; it frequently becomes the more darling object of her own idolatry, than of her most professed admirers; and her own flattery is far more dangerous than theirs. When your desire of pleasing discovers itself in attentions to your external appearance, in giddy vivacity and capricious opinion, you teach those who wish for your esteem and favour to use the same means to obtain them. Another mode of courting, or rather deserving the respect of Mankind, would give a turn to their conduct, who might wish to be among your friends;

friends; and many who, at this moment, are unambitious of the title, would then press after it as an honour.

If Your Grace aims at consequence and importance, be a Christian, and you will certainly obtain them. Acting under such happy principles, you will be the idol of the good, and command an unwilling respect even from the bad. Do you desire power?—Be a Christian, and you will possess the most delightful empire. It will extend over those you love, and administer to their happiness;—it will govern the evil propensities of human nature, and secure your own.—Are your wishes ever directed to fame and reputation?—Practise the duties of your

station as a Christian, and your name will be written in the Book of Life. Do you sigh after pleasure?—Your Grace will find it in exercising the ample power which you possess of doing good. The pleasures of Religion are not like those of the World, which depend upon such a variety of contingent circumstances, are preceded by so much anxiety, enjoyed with such a feverish pleasure, and followed with such frequent dissatisfaction. They are certain, and every passing moment brings along with it an opportunity of enjoying them. They will depend upon yourself alone; and if the fortunes of your House should totter, they would still be yours:—the sorrows of Life may trouble, but cannot destroy them;

them ; human obstructions cannot preclude their final enjoyment ;—no lazy interval of Misery interweaves itself with them : active and progressive, they destroy that leisure wherein the Imagination never fails to practise its delusions, and to aid the corruption of the mind.

It is observed by a Writer distinguished for his just opinions of Men and Manners, that the concluding mark of a corrupt Age is the depravity of Women ; and sorry am I to declare, that the times wherein we live, seem to menace us with this stigma of Corruption. The number of divorces which have lately taken place,—the many domestic separations which now exist and are increa-

increasing,—the public inattentions and indifference which so many Husbands and Wives in high life shew for each other,—the spirit of Gallantry which prevails among the married, and of Coquetry among the unmarried Women,—with many other circumstances of a similar nature, force the most humane and benevolent to lament that, unless some very great and sudden change should take place in public manners, Corruption will not long want this fatal sign of its consummation.

To effect any Reformation of Manners in an Age of so much luxury as this wherein we live, must be the work of those who are placed in such a pre-eminent station as is regarded

regarded with respect by the inferior classes of People: and for my own part, I am fully persuaded that Your Grace might give Vice and Folly a very considerable check by becoming yourself an example of Christian Virtue. The circumstances which have already made you so much the object of fashionable imitation, will not fail to give you weight and importance with your Sex, in whatever path you should tread, even should it be in so unfashionable a one as that of Religion.—I think Your Grace would be followed there: for when a person surrounded as you are with all that inconsiderate mortals suppose can procure happiness, makes all the surrounding pleasures subservient to a life of rational piety, such a conduct must

must produce a striking conviction in favour of Religion and Virtue. When a *Duchess of Devonshire*, who is one of the first Women in the Kingdom in beauty, rank, and fortune, and so much the object of personal admiration and personal imitation, employs all the privileges and influence she possesses to encourage, promote, and countenance Virtue; I am firmly persuaded that Virtue must thrive under such protection, and with such a sanction as she could afford it; and that numbers might be turned to the right pursuit of happiness by her example, if her awakened wisdom should direct her to seek it in the ways of Religion.

In pursuing this course, Your Grace would, without doubt, be deserted by many of those whom you have called, and perhaps thought your Friends ; but if *Devonshire-House* should become the resort of those persons of both Sexes who are the most eminent for their virtues ; if Parents, who are truly anxious for the welfare of their children, should think it a real honour that they should be admitted there, as a proof, in the opinion of the World, of their merit and understanding ; if beneath your splendid roof loud Festivity should yield to improving amusements, heart-felt chearfulness and decent pleasure, you would experience an happiness you have not hitherto known :—it would not
be

be interrupted by the malignant taunts of envious Vice; nor would the mortification of a moment pass across your breast, tho' the midnight flambeaux of Lady C— —, and all such as Lady C— —, never gleamed upon your gates.

At present, so great is the power of external appearance, every man who bears the title of a Gentleman, who dresses well, flatters agreeably, and understands what is called the *Ton*, is qualified to become the acquaintance of Your Grace, or any other Woman who lives in the Circles of Fashion; while the vice which supports his splendor and degrades his character is unobserved amid the tags and tinsel of his foppery.

foppery. Other, and I will add far better qualifications must be necessary to give any one admittance to your society in the situation where my hopes have fondly placed you; and which, I trust, you will not fail to realize. Modesty, Knowledge, Sincerity, Reputation, Honour, Integrity, and rational Piety will then be requisite to give any Candidate for the honour of your acquaintance the least hopes of obtaining it: No less will win her Grace, whom all commend. Indeed, the vicious and abandoned, the child of Folly and the Nurseling of Fashion would not then attempt so vain an enterprize. The virtuous alone can gain admittance to the Temple of Virtue, and receive a smile of favour
from

from the Priests who ministers at the altar.

This is an Age of universal enquiry.—The powers of Art, the depths of Science, and the secrets of Nature, were never so minutely considered and examined as in these times.—The manners, customs, laws, privileges, &c. &c. of foreign nations, have been more frequently and correctly described in these days, than in any which have preceded them.—But modern Curiosity, besides its greater exertions in the ordinary branches of enquiry, has taken a new turn, at least in this Kingdom, and directs itself with very great attention to the minute circumstances of private life, and the particular
conduct

conduct of private characters.—
 Your Grace must be sensible, that
 this is truth, as the public Papers
 have frequently informed the World
 of matters respecting yourself, which
 the Duke of D— — and
 Lady S— — only knew in
 common with the rest of the
 Town.

The conclusion which I would de-
 rive from these observations is this :
 —That from the rage after anecdotes
 and private history, which at pre-
 sent prevails, and the uncommon
 pains which is taken to gratify it,
 Posterity will possess a degree of bio-
 graphical information, which nei-
 ther this nor any former Age has ever
 known. A person, therefore, of your
 H high

high rank and personal qualifications will be, without doubt, the subject of some future Domestic Historian, who, if your present love of pleasure should continue, and he should take his description from thence, will, probably, form something like the following character of Your Grace :

“ This Lady was married at a
 “ very early age to the Duke of
 “ --- --- ---, who signalised his
 “ affection for her by every mark of
 “ the most unbounded generosity.
 “ At this time she was considered as
 “ one of the most beautiful Women
 “ in the Kingdom, and, from the
 “ virtues of her noble parents, the
 “ uncommon attention which was
 “ paid

“ paid to her education, and the pre-
 “ cautions which had been taken to
 “ preserve her from the contagion of
 “ the Age, great expectations were
 “ formed of her future conduct, and
 “ it was not doubted but she would
 “ prove an unrivalled example of
 “ female excellence. But Youth
 “ cannot be trusted amid the seduc-
 “ tions of Pleasure, when it possesses
 “ the utmost means of enjoying
 “ them.—Inspired with an uncom-
 “ mon vivacity of temper, and ha-
 “ ving experienced no medium be-
 “ tween parental controul and the
 “ boundless indulgence of a Hus-
 “ band, her Grace yielded to the de-
 “ lusions which played around her,
 “ and suffered herself to be tempted
 “ into a rage after pleasure, which,

“ at once, blasted all the fond expect-
 “ tations concerning her. Fashion
 “ submitted its capricious fancies
 “ to her controul, and she was de-
 “ lighted to direct them. Flattery
 “ was continually at her ear, and she
 “ encouraged its adulations. Va-
 “ nity prepared her Temple, and she
 “ became the Priestess of it. Plea-
 “ sure solicited a place in her heart,
 “ and she gave up the whole of it to
 “ that deluding Syren ;— while Dis-
 “ cretion and Good-Sense, finding
 “ themselves deserted and unnoticed,
 “ resigned their care ; and of all the
 “ Virtues which once possessed an in-
 “ terest in her, Chastity alone refused
 “ to abandon her. The consequences
 “ of such a conduct did not belie the
 “ source of them. Her health was
 “ lost,

“ lost, her constitution impaired,
 “ and she proved a barren Wife, to
 “ the great disappointment of her
 “ noble family. With her beau-
 “ ty, her flatterers fled away ;—with
 “ her health, the means of enjoying
 “ pleasure were at an end ;—and ha-
 “ ving rested her dignity upon ca-
 “ price and fashion, it sunk with
 “ them. In short, she languished an
 “ unrespected and hypochondriac
 “ Character to her death, which was
 “ scarce lamented, and happened at
 “ a period when the wife only begin
 “ to know the real pleasure of life.”

By persons of impartial observation,
 I shall not, I trust, be accused of the
 least disposition to unfavourable par-
 tiality in the foregoing picture ; nor

will they accuse me of heightening the colours of that with which I am about to contrast it. Upon the pleasing supposition, therefore, that Your Grace will change the manners of the World for those of a Christian, and pursue Christian happiness instead of worldly pleasure, I shall endeavour to forestal the character which the future Biographer will give you, and the honest praises which he will bestow upon your virtues. Passing over your rank and personal advantages, which all know and confess, I shall imagine him to proceed in the following manner :

“ It must be acknowledged, that
 “ her Grace soon disappointed the
 “ expectations which, from the un-
 “ com-

“ common care that had been given
 “ to her education, the World had
 “ formed of her growing charac-
 “ ter, by a violent attachment to
 “ pleasurable amusements, and a
 “ fond ambition to prescribe and
 “ give laws to the Fashionable World.
 “ But Human Nature at best is fal-
 “ lible, and if the situation and live-
 “ ly disposition of this Lady are
 “ considered but for a moment, her
 “ deviations from discretion will be
 “ found to be less deserving of con-
 “ demnation, than her perfect return
 “ to it, of praise and admiration.
 “ Her good sense soon recovered
 “ from the delirium in which it had
 “ been obscured, and broke forth
 “ from the clouds of error with all
 “ the splendor of Christian virtue.

“ Her ardor of pursuit was not re-
 “ mitted, but the objects of it were
 “ changed ; and the airy phan-
 “ toms of false pleasure vanished
 “ from before her, the moment she
 “ gave her attention to substantial
 “ good. The latter was now be-
 “ come the object of her life ; and
 “ she daily grew into the esteem and
 “ veneration of Mankind. Her ex-
 “ ternal deportment charmed every
 “ beholder, who thought nothing
 “ could exceed it, till they heard her
 “ discourse, and enjoyed her con-
 “ versation. Her piety was warm,
 “ but rational, and took the middle
 “ path between indifference and en-
 “ thusiasm : and such was the influ-
 “ ence she acquired by her wise and
 “ amiable conduct, that she became
 “ an

“ an example to all ranks of people,
 “ —gave a turn to the manners of
 “ the times,—checked the spirit of
 “ dissipation and excess, and saved
 “ desponding Virtue from the de-
 “ struction which threatened it.—
 “ Blest with a numerous issue, she
 “ formed them by the standard of her
 “ own virtues; and the first persons
 “ of the Kingdom sought an alliance
 “ with her family, more from an ad-
 “ miration of the goodness, than the
 “ rank and wealth which distinguish-
 “ ed it;---while the Duke her Hus-
 “ band was thought to derive more
 “ honour from her virtue, than from
 “ the long illustrious train of An-
 “ cestors from whom he descended.
 “ Her house was the resort of the
 “ most eminent and virtuous persons
 “ then

“ then living ;--- nor was it less the
 “ asylum of the unfortunate, by
 “ whatever name their miseries
 “ might be distinguished. In her,
 “ merit of every kind found a cer-
 “ tain patroness ; and when bashful
 “ Modesty hid it in obscurity, she
 “ called it forth to that public re-
 “ gard which ever waited upon her
 “ protection. In short, to sum up
 “ the excellence of this Lady’s cha-
 “ racter,---SHE WAS A CHRISTIAN.—
 “ Heaven, for the good of Mankind,
 “ continued this rare pattern of fe-
 “ male perfection to a very advan-
 “ ced age, when she died without a
 “ groan, lamented beyond the de-
 “ scription of my pen, and leaving a
 “ name behind her, which will be
 [“ remembered with veneration when
 “ brass

“ brass and marble shall cease to record it.”

This, Madam, is a very imperfect sketch of that character, which it is in your power to possess while you live, and when you shall be no more. —A sensibility to future fame, as it is the mark of a great and noble mind, might, I trust, be easily awakened in yours: and tho’ I shall not live to see the page which may do this honour to your virtue,---without a wish for long life, I may hope to be a witness of that excellence which will deserve it.

I must acknowledge, Madam, that this Letter has grown beneath my pen to a length which, on any other

other subject, would demand apology : but I will, nay, I cannot suppose, that a zeal for your best interest and real happiness, even in my unpolished declarations, should require excuse. My heart, I believe, will never reproach me for this offering of it. Nay, Madam, whatever may be your sentiments on the first perusal of this Volume, the time may be at hand, when you will applaud its counsels, and feel some emotions of gratitude to the unknown author of it.

May your Grace regard with attention the picture which I have drawn of Religious Happiness ! May you, Madam, aspire to attain it, and I doubt not but the time will come,
when

when you will be pre-eminently call'd THE CHRISTIAN DUCHESS. It is a great and distinguished title. The World in all its store-houses of Honour, has not such another ;—for it adorns this World, and is derived from Heaven.

The Fops and Fools who flutter about you may laugh at this idea, and make it the subject of their pointed raillery ;—but should your Grace realize it, they will soon be silent with admiration. Such scoffers at every thing which is praise-worthy and amiable, would make any regard you might shew to their opinions a subject of equal laughter. Tho' they might treat your prudence with levity before your face,---
should

should you be affected by it, they would not fail in your absence to throw a more lively ridicule upon your folly.

Permit me for a moment to urge it to your consideration, whether you were adorned with superior beauty, enriched with enormous wealth, and elevated to the highest rank, in short, whether you were born for no better purpose than to be flattered, followed and courted by rakes, libertines, and spendthrifts. If it should be Your Grace's opinion, that your nature is capable of higher attainments, and formed for superior objects, you would do well to display those winning attractions and elevating virtues
which

which will make you almost idolized by the best persons of all ages, ranks, and conditions. And I must beg permission to add, that the wisdom of such a resolution would be rendered compleat by your entering upon the immediate practice of it.

I am more sensibly led to this reflection by the account of LADY EGLINGTON's death, which reached me as I was employed on this page. She was young and beautiful, and a Countess, but neither youth, beauty, nor rank, could save her from the sudden stroke of that unceremonious Power, who without the previous notice of a moment may intrude upon your pleasures, and change your Temple of Vanity into the Vault of Death.

The

The summons of Fate does not appal the good, tho' it meets them beneath the morning sun, and in their early day. To dispel then such gloomy ideas, or rather to banish all trouble from them,—be a Christian.—I most sincerely wish it, Madam, for the happiness of Your Grace, the honour of your Sex, the good of ours, and the many benefits which Society will derive from your wisdom and piety. And if the foregoing Pages should have, in any degree, awakened your reflection, or animated your good sense to consider the nature of the Female Character, wherein its true dignity consists, and how its real happiness is to be obtained;—if, to use a common phrase, I should have been instrumental

mental in leading Your Grace *to set the Fashion* of being a Christian,—I shall not have written—permit me, Madam, to add, in the warmth of my heart,—I shall not have lived in vain.

I have the honour of being,

With great respect,

Your Grace's

Most Sincere,

And Obedient Humble Servant,

The Author

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VIRG.

[*To be continued.*]

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